The ACS Commemorates World Tsunami Awareness Day

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November 5, 2023

"Fighting inequality for a resilient future"

In December 2015, the United Nations General Assembly designated November 5th as World Tsunami Awareness Day, a crucial milestone in global governance for disaster risk reduction. This annual observance serves as a reminder of our collective commitment to promoting sustainability and reducing the disproportionate impacts of tsunamis on vulnerable populations worldwide.

Tsunamis, although less frequent than other natural hazards, possess the potential for catastrophic impacts on communities, especially those lacking the capacity to prepare for and respond to such events. These vulnerable populations may include those with low income, individuals with disabilities, indigenous groups, women, children and the elderly. For example, the 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami had particularly devastating impacts on impoverished communities in Indonesia, India and Sri Lanka (Oxfam, 2005). Furthermore, a study on the 2011 Great East Japan earthquake and tsunami found that older individuals with limited mobility, reduced physical strength, and delayed evacuation accounted for 64.4 per cent of the total casualties (Sawai, 2012).

This year, the theme for World Tsunami Awareness Day, "Fighting inequality for a resilient future" aligns with the International Day for Disaster Risk Reduction theme. It underscores the importance of addressing the root causes of disaster risk, including poverty, exposure and vulnerability through collective, inclusive and coordinated actions, all grounded in best practices from around the world.

In the Greater Caribbean region where the majority of people reside in coastal areas exposed to extreme sea level events such as tsunamis, addressing these challenges is imperative. The region also faces socio-economic complexities, such as high poverty rates, crime, unemployment and food insecurity. To create a more resilient future in this region, we must engage in proactive governance

and adhere to international best practices.

One way to combat inequalities and enhance sustainability in the Greater Caribbean region is to implement comprehensive preparedness programmes. These programs, must be rooted in best practices from across the globe and must empower local communities to take proactive measures in anticipation of tsunami events. Additionally, they should prioritise the development of thorough hazard zone and evacuation maps, early warning systems and regular training and simulations, which are tailored to those who may be more vulnerable to tsunami impacts such as children, the elderly and persons with disabilities. In this process, we can promote sustainable governance by involving youth, local authorities, civil society organisations, community members and the private sector, fostering inclusivity and cooperation at all levels.

In its Plan of Action 2022 to 2028, the ACS has made a firm commitment to promote sustainable governance by facilitating risk-informed programming and humanitarian action. This commitment speaks to the importance of strengthening response capabilities within local communities through the implementation of early warning systems that are specifically targeted to traditionally marginalised groups. International cooperation is vital in this effort. As such we extend an invitation to you to partner with us as we work together to combat inequalities, enhance sustainability, and build a resilient future in the Greater Caribbean region.

#GetToHighGround #TsunamiDay #EarlyWarningForAll

Resources

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